

Semantics and Philosophy in Europe 11

Warsaw-Lvov Lecture 1

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Twardowski's Distinction between Actions and Products. Its Importance and Its Limitations

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1. Twardowski's distinction between actions and products

1.1. The standard view of propositional attitudes

Two sorts of entities are associated with propositional attitudes

1. Mental acts or states or illocutionary acts
2. Propositions

The standard view of nominalizations of attitude verbs

Ambiguous between standing for acts or states and propositions:

- (1) a. John's thought that Mary is happy
- b. John's claim that Mary likes Bill

Properties of acts:

- (2) a. John's claim caused astonishment.
- b. John's claim yesterday was astonishing.

Properties of propositions:

- (3) a. John's claim is true.
- b. John's claim implies that S.

Ambiguity / polysemy: reference to event or reference to proposition

Propositions: Frege, Bolzano, most contemporary philosophers of language

1.2. Twardowski's action-product distinction

Twardowski's arguments:

Two sorts of nominalizations in Polish, German, French – and, one can add, English:

Gerunds as terms for actions and other nominalizations as terms for products

thinking – thought

judging – judgment

believing – belief

claiming – claim

deciding – decision

screaming – scream

Psychological actions – psychological products

Psychophysical actions – psychophysical products

Enduring products – nonenduring products

Enduring products: writing – writing, drawing – drawing

Physical actions – physical products?

walking – walk, jumping – jump, dancing – dance

Distinguishing characteristics of actions and products (for Twardowski)

1. Products, but not actions, have truth or satisfaction conditions and enter inferential relations:

(4) a. John's claim / John's belief is true

b. ?? John's claiming / John's act of claiming / John's speech act is true.

c. John's believing / John's belief state is true.

d. The belief that A and B implies the belief that B.

2. Products but not actions enter similarity relations based on shared content only:

Products of the same type are exactly similar iff they are the same in content.

Exact similarity: 'is the same as'

(5) a. John's claim / John's belief is the same as Mary's.

b. John's claiming / John's belief state is the same as Mary's.

Similarity between products and actions for Twardowski

1. Actions and products are concrete mind-dependent particulars. (unproblematic)

2. Products share their temporal duration with the action producing them. (problematic)

Sharing the same propositional content for Twardowski

Engaging in actions with similar products

Understanding a product p (e.g. a claim): producing a product similar to p, caused by p

The importance of products for Twardowski

- serve as truth bearers
 - account for the appearance of a stable content through the production of similar products
 - make up the subject matter of logic
 - make up the subject matter of all humanities
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2. Making sense of Twardowski's notion of a product: products as artifacts

Abstract artifacts (Thomasson 1999): artifacts that lack a physical realization.

The ontology of artifacts (Ingarden / Thomasson)

Artifacts are agent / mind-dependent, have a limited lifespan, may or may not come with a physical realization, and have the ability to represent. They are neither actions nor material objects nor abstract objects, but belong to a category of its own.

Further action-product pairs, with products possibly lacking physical realization

Law – act of declaring / passing it

Objects of art – act of creation

Objects of art possibly lacking physical realization: poetic, musical compositions

Object of art with multiple realizations: books, uncast statues

Cognitive and illocutionary products as artifacts

With physical realization: claims, screams

With material realization: writings

3. Towards a larger category than products: attitudinal and modal objects

Attitudinal objects properly include cognitive and illocutionary products

Attitudinal share relevant characteristic properties with modal objects

1. Attitudinal objects that are state-related and not necessarily the product of an act:

beliefs, intentions, desires

Attitudinal objects may *state-related*, but they are ontologically distinct from states, displaying different sorts of properties.

Belief -- belief state, believing

Desire – state of desiring

Intention -- intending

2. Attitudinal objects that are prior to their related act, as occurrences defining acts, but not products of acts: conclusions, recognitions, judgments

3. Modal objects: obligations, permissions, needs, dispositions, abilities

Modal objects share the relevant content-related properties of attitudinal objects, but can last beyond the act that may have set them up.

4. Further elaboration and extension of the characteristics of actions / states and attitudinal objects

4.1. Truth- and satisfaction conditions

Truth predicates:

(6) a. John's claim that that S is true / false.

b. ?? John's claiming that S is true / false.

c. ?? John's speech act (of claiming) is true.

Predicates of fulfillment:

(7) a. John's request to be promoted was fulfilled / satisfied/.

b. ?? John's act of requesting was fulfilled / satisfied.

(8) a. Mary accepted the offer.

b. ??? Mary accepted the act of offering.

Predicates of realization

(9) a. John's decision to postpone the meeting was implemented.

b. ?? John's act of deciding was implemented.

(10) a. John realized his intention.

b. ?? John realized his (state of) intending.

Action-related predicates of satisfaction

- (11) a. John followed Mary's advice.
 b. ? John followed Mary's activity of advising.
- (12) a. John complied with the instruction.
 b. ? John complied with the act of instructing.
- (13) a. John ignored the command.
 b. John ignored the act of commanding.

4.3. Similarity relations

Attitudinal objects of the same type enter similarity relations strictly based on being the same in content

- (14) a. John's thought is the same as Mary's thought.
 b. ?? John's thinking is the same as Mary's thinking.
 c. ??? John's thought was also his remark.

4.4. Properties of understanding and content-based causation and evaluation

- (15) a. John's speaking delighted Mary.
 b. John's speech delighted Mary.
- (16) a. John's answer caused surprise.
 b. John's giving an answer caused surprise.
- (17) a. John's utterance inspired many comments.
 b. John's act of uttering inspired many comments.

4.5. Properties of part-whole structure

Parts of cognitive and illocutionary products

'Part of John's decision': partial content

'Part of the action of deciding': temporal part of an action

'Part of John's claim': partial content

'Part of John's act of claiming': temporal part of an act

Parts of materially realized products

'Describing a part of the book': either partial content or physical part

4.6. Correctness: normativity and attitudinal objects

Correctness as truth vs correctness of an action

- (18) a. John's claim is correct. (claim is true)

- b. John's act of claiming that S is correct. (act follows instruction, say)
- (19) a. John's belief is correct. (belief is true)

- b. John's believing is correct. (maintaining a state fulfills an instruction)

Truth as a norm imposed on representational objects (Jarvis 2012):

associated with attitudinal objects, but not with actions or states (or propositions)

4.7. Properties of mental states and of state-related attitudinal objects

- A mental state (of believing, hoping, desiring, intending) intuitively is not true or false, unlike a belief; cannot be fulfilled, unlike a hope or desire; and cannot be realized, unlike an intention.
 - Part of a mental state is not a partial content, unlike part of a belief, desire, or hope. Part of a mental state is a temporal part, or perhaps better, a condition partly constitutive of the state (a condition that, together with others, obtains while the state endures).
 - Two mental states (of the same type) are not (just) the same if they are the same in content. Rather constitutive features (including strength of the attitude) need to be the same.
 - Mental states are not correct in the sense of being true, unlike beliefs
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5. What sort of content do attitudinal objects come with?

Content comes with notion of partial content

Different types of attitudinal objects go with different types of satisfaction predicates

Best approach to capture the two conditions:

(object-based) truthmaker semantics (cf. lecture on truthmaker semantics)

Attitudinal objects have actions or situations as satisfiers.

Some attitudinal objects have actions or situations as violators.

The (positive) meaning of a sentence S in (sentence-based) truthmaker semantics:

Set of actions or situations that are truthmakers of S

Derived sentence meanings in (object-based) truthmaker semantics:

(20) Sentence Meanings as Properties of (Attitudinal) Objects

[S] = λd [the content of S is a partial content of d]

5. The semantic role of attitudinal objects in attitude reports

The role of propositions in philosophy of language and semantics

- Primary bearers of truth values
- The meanings of sentences / embedded sentences
- The contents or 'objects' of propositional attitudes

The semantic roles of propositions

1. Figure in the Relational Analysis of attitude reports:

(21) a. John believes that Mary is happy.

b. believe(John, [*that Mary is happy*])

2. Form the range of special quantifiers in sentential position:

(22) a. John thinks that Mary is happy.

John thinks something.

b. Mary believes everything Bill believes.

Bill believes that it is raining.

Mary believes that it is raining.

Nominalizing quantifiers

(23) a. John claims / knows / fears something.

b. John imagines / expects that.

c. John claims what Mary claims.

(24) a. John said something nice (namely that S).

b. John thought something very daring (namely that S).

c. John imagined something exciting.

(25) John said something that made Mary very upset.

Restrictions on reports of shared content of different attitudes

(26) a. ?? John screamed what Mary believes, namely that Bill was elected president.

b. ?? John expects what Mary believes, namely that Sue will study harder.

c. ?? John said what Mary believes, namely that it will rain.

(27) a. ?? John's scream was Mary's belief.

b. ?? John's expectation is Mary's belief.

c. ?? John's claim was Mary's belief.

Davidsonian event semantics

Actions (and abstract states) as Davidsonian implicit argument of attitude verbs

Function of *that*-clauses

Predicates of the attitudinal object associated with the Davidsonian event argument

(28) a. John thought that S.

b. John has the thought that S.

c. $\exists e(\text{think}(e, \text{John}) \ \& \ [\textit{that} \ S](\text{att-obj}(e)))$

(29) a. John thought something nice.

b. $\exists e \exists e'(\text{think}(e, \text{John}) \ \& \ \text{nice}(e') \ \& \ e' = \text{att-obj}(e))$

(30) a. John thought what Mary thought.

b. $\exists e \ e' \ e''(\text{think}(e, \text{John}) \ \& \ e' = \text{att-obj-kind}(e) \ \& \ \text{think}(e'', \text{Mary}) \ \& \ e' = \text{att-obj-kind}(e''))$

John's thought that S: particular attitudinal object

The thought that S: kind of attitudinal object

Mental state verbs

(31) a. John believes that S.

b. $\exists e(\text{believe}(e, \text{John}) \ \& \ [\textit{that} \ S](\text{att-obj}(e)))$

e: abstract state of having a belief (believing), att-obj(e): belief

7. The Importance of Twardowski's distinction

- Products (attitudinal objects) as content bearers are reflected in language itself and thus clearly form part of the ontology of language, unlike propositions.
 - Products (attitudinal objects) are reflected not just in nominalizations, but also the semantics of special quantifiers and pronouns
 - Products (attitudinal objects) are part of our general intuitions about entities in our mental life
 - Products (attitudinal objects) can dispense with propositions and the problems associated with that notion
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8. Difficulties for Twardowski's action-product distinction

1. State-related attitudinal objects, beliefs, hopes, intentions, and desires, cannot generally be viewed as products of action, yet share the characteristic properties of products

2. Modal objects, needs, obligations, permissions, invitations, offers, etc exhibit same characteristic properties as attitudinal objects:
 - features of concreteness (having a limited lifespan, perhaps being causally efficacious)
 - content-related properties as attitudinal objects (having satisfaction conditions, standing in similarity relations based on shared content only, having a part structure strictly based on partial content)

One major difference between modal and attitudinal objects

Modal objects may last beyond the act that created them.

E.g. an obligation, permission, offer

Modal objects may be, but need not be products of acts

'Heavy' (or explicit) obligations and permissions are generally products of acts (of demanding or permitting), but not 'light' (or implicit) permissions and obligations, nor are various sorts of needs and abilities.

Some attitudinal objects may have a modal component

Claims, promises, requests may last beyond the acts that produced them.

Indication: Possibility of present tense in specificational sentences with attitudinal objects created in the past:

(32) John's claim / promise / request is that S.

This would go along with more recent commitment-based views of assertions.

Further applications of attitudinal and modal objects

Modelling the common ground: as a (collective) attitudinal object with modal component:

Cf. recent modal views of the common ground (Geurts 2019, Krifka's 'commitment spaces')

3. Certain types of act-related attitudinal objects do not fare well with the action-product distinction understood as the distinction between an action and the produced artifact:

- A recognition that S and a realization that S are not the intended products of epistemic acts, rather they are occurrences that, if anything, may have answered a state or act of inquiry.
- A particular conclusion is not the intended product of an act of reasoning; an act of concluding that S is individuated by conclusion reached, not by the mental activity as such.
- Perlocutions are not the intended products of acts. An act of persuading itself is individuated by the effect it happens to have, the persuasion, not by realizing a type of action.
- A judgment that S is not the realization of an intentional action, but what an agent arrives at when evaluating a thought (or propositional content).

Consequence for Davidsonian event theory

Some Davidsonian events (and states) may depend for their identity on particular types of attitudinal objects (rather than vice versa).

General consequence

Given that attitudinal objects and modal objects cannot generally be regarded products of acts, the content-related features of attitudinal (and modal) objects cannot be traced to an intentional act (say if predication) (Hanks 2011, 2017, Soames 2010).

The notion of an artifact and the notion of an intentional act creating it could not account for explaining the representational capacity of attitudinal and modal objects in general.

9. General Conclusion

Twardowski's notion of a product is part of larger category of attitudinal and modal objects, which cannot generally be understood in terms of the notion of an abstract artifact and which cannot in any way be identified with events and states. Some events or states instead are individuated in terms of certain types of attitudinal object.

The category of attitudinal and modal objects plays a central role in attitude reports, for communication in general, in the ontology of mind, and for modality.

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